



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 31, 2014

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Law and Order Committee receives update report on the Navajo Nation Suicide Surveillance System Project

WINDOW ROCK – On Monday, the Law and Order Committee received an update report regarding the Navajo Nation Suicide Surveillance System Project, which was created and will be carried out by the Navajo Nation Epidemiology Center.

The NNEC is proposing a pilot-program to initiate a suicide surveillance project to identify risks and preventative measures relating to suicides and suicide attempts through information sharing with the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety.

According to NNEC epidemiologist Ramona Antone Nez, it has been difficult for their department to establish a working relationship with the NNDPS and hoped to receive guidance from the LOC.

“What seems to be the barrier at this point other than collaborating, is they [NNDPS] are concerned with confidentiality and I think they are trying to protect that as well,” said LOC vice chair Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichii, Steamboat).

Delegate Shepherd added that public safety officials have authority over sensitive information on suicide occurrences, which may pose a problem. However, he said the NNEC should have access to demographic information such as age, gender, employment, etc. for purposes of understanding and preventing suicides on the Navajo Nation.

According to the report, in addition to seeking demographical information, NNEC representatives want to be able to accompany public safety on-scene of a suicide or attempted suicide as an emergency response unit to aid in collecting information.

LOC member Council Delegate Russell Begaye (Shiprock) expressed his support of the Suicide Surveillance System Project, and asked the NNEC if their department is willing to provide funding or staff to travel to the suicide scenes or to produce reports at the police stations.

“I only ask this because our police officers get so bogged down with writing reports and if you require additional reporting from them, it may cause officers to fall behind on their work,” said Delegate Begaye.

Delegate Begaye suggested that the NNEC request a meeting between the directors of the Navajo Nation Division of Health and Division of Public Safety as a starting point to establish a relationship between both divisions to begin the information sharing process.

LOC members voted 2-0 to accept the report.

In addition to the NNEC report, Legislation No. 0177-14 was considered by the LOC, however it was ruled out of order due to technicalities found within the legislation language. The legislation aims to adopt the Healthy Diné Nation Act of 2014, which would impose an additional two-percent sales tax on food items that are considered to have minimal to no nutritional value.

Legislation No. 0177-14 will be considered by the LOC again on Monday, August 11.

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